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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Wednesday, February 8, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "TIPS ON BUYING BLANKETS." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, U.S.D.A. Publication offered: "Guides for Buying Sheets, Blankets and Bath Towels", Farmers' Bulletin No. 1765.

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Some happy day--let's hope--every blanket on sale in the stores will have a label that will really help the housewife in buying. Some happy day each blanket will declare exactly how much wool or other fiber it contains; how much it weighs; how long and how wide it is; how it is constructed and how it is finished. Those are the facts you need to know in order to make a good buy in blankets.

But as yet only a few progressive manufacturers are putting such information on their blankets. So in general it's up to the shopper to be able to choose a blanket that will give warmth and wear and comfort at a reasonable price. I'm going to report to you today a few tips on blanket buying from the Kansas Experiment Station where textile workers recently made a blanket study.

When you to to buy a blanket, the first point to check on is what it's made of. Is it all wool or part wool? If it's part wool, what's the rest made of? And how much of each fiber is used? It's very important to find out exactly what percent of wool is in the mixture, for a very small amount is no help to the warmth--not worth paying more for. If you are buying a wool or cotton mixture, for example, be sure that more than 25 percent--more than a fourth of the contents is wool. Any less wool than that isn't worth the investment because it doesn't add enough to the warmth of the blanket. You might just as well buy an all-cotton blanket. Then find out, if you can, whether the cotton has been used in the warp or the woof threads. If it is used only in the fine warp yars, it won't affect the warmth of the blanket and may even add a little to the strength. But if the cotton is used in the coarse filling yarns which later are napped for warmth, the blanket will not be nearly so warm as one of all wool.

A second point to check on is size. And that's always easy. If you buy blankets that are too short, somebody in your home is going to have cold shoulders or cold feet. Aside from being uncomfortable, short blankets wear out before they should because they are under constant strain during use. The person under them is always pulling them up or down. When you go to buy a blanket, remember that ordinarily 84 inches is long enough, but if your mattress is very thick, you'll need 90 inches in length.

Another point to check on is how much the blanket weighs. A blanket that is too light for its size won't be strong enough to give good wear. What you want is a blanket that is strong, warm and comfortable. So ask the salesman to weigh it for you before you buy. And then compare the weight with the size. The lowest weight for wear is 12 ounces for each square yard. If the blanket is lighter than that, it won't last long. Here's the way that works out: A single blanket 84 by 60 inches should weigh not less than 2 and three-quarter pounds. A single balnket 85 by 66 inches should weigh not less than 3 pounds; and a double blanket 84 by 72 inches

should weigh not less than 3 and a half pounds! Blankets that are slightly heavier than these weights will give more protection from cold and more wear.

To make blankets warm, the wool fiber is brushed up on the surface and made fluffy. This nap or fluffiness on the surface is all right if you have a firm foundation in the weave and if the wool fibers are long enough to hold. If the fibers are too short or if the nap is too deep for the foundation, the wool will shed during use and cleaning, and the blanket will lose much of its warmth. When you are buying a blanket, you can test the strength of the nap, by pinching it between the thumb and finger and then lifting the whole blanket. If the nap will hold that much weight, the fibers are long enough for good wear.

Still another point to check on, especially if the blanket seems unusually cheap, is whether the wool is new, or old and reworked. Old wool is heavier and doesn't give as much warmth or wear. The "feel" of the blanket is your best clue here. Try comparing the "feel" of different blankets. You'll notice that old reworked fibers feel dead or lifeless while the new ones have a natural spring.

A blanket that shrinks unevenly is a trial to any housekeeper. Haven't you seen them come from the laundry, wide in one place and narrow in another? The reason for this is that the yarns used in weaving the blanket are uneven--some are lightweight and some are heavy, some are thick and some are thin, or different types of yarn are used. The border or design has different yarns from the rest of the blanket. To avoid uneven shrinkage, make sure before you buy that only one size and type of yarn is used in any one direction.

The final hint from the Kansas blanket investigators is about price. Since prices may change from year to year, they can't tell you exactly in dollars and cents how much you should pay for a blanket. But they say that an all-wool blanket of long, new fibers, which weighs enough and is of the proper size-- a blanket like that with all the best qualities will be in the upper price range, as you might expect. The price is lower as more cotton is mixed with wool or as poorer wool is used. Only the cheaper blankets are likely to contain old or reworked wool. Size affects cost, too. The larger blankets are more expensive, but a blanket that is the right size for the bed pays in comfort and wear.

Those are the tips from the Kansas Station on making a good buy in blankets. Let's just briefly run over the points for the wise buyer to check on: first, the fibers--whether all wool or part wool and how much of each fiber in the mixture; second, the size of a blanket, with 84 as the minimum for a full length bed; third, weight--12 ounces for each square yard; fourth, strong enough nap (which means long enough fibers); fifth, new wool fibers; sixth, uniform yarns in any one direction.

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